

Model Details	
Subject Name	Political Science
Paper Name	Foreign Policy of India
Module Id Name/Title	1. India's Foreign Policy: Historical Background, Objectives and Principles
Module Id	1
Pre-requisites	
Objectives	This module will analyze the origin, working, objectives and principles of India's foreign policy. Important questions and suggested readings have also been attached with this module.
Keywords	India's Foreign Policy, Historical Background, Ideological Moorings, Objectives of India's Foreign Policy, Principles of India's Foreign Policy, National Security, World Order, UN System, Non-alignment, Peaceful Coexistence.
Structure of Module/Syllabus of a Module	
Evolution of the Discipline	

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Principle Investigator		
Paper Coordinator		
Language Editor(LE)		

India's Foreign Policy: Historical Background, Objectives and Principles

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1. Introduction

Foreign policy is the sum total of principles, interests and objectives which a state formulates in conducting its relations with other states. Similarly, each state has its foreign policy through which it tries to develop relations with other nations at international level. Through its foreign

policy, states make efforts to change the behaviour of other states or to control and regulate the activities of other states to attain its nation interests. Hence, foreign policy represents both continuity and change in the relations among states. Besides, it represents both positive and negative dimensions. It is positive when it makes efforts to change the behaviour of other states, while it works negative when it do not try to change the activities of other states. Therefore, foreign policy is a commitment by the state to put forward its principles, interests and objectives by way of which one state tries its best to pursue its relations with other states in the international system. In this context, states not only take decision regarding their foreign policy but also establish relations with other states. However, foreign policy behaviour of the state is dependent upon the evaluation of cost- benefit, as well as, risks involved and the capabilities of that sate.

2. Objectives

Through this module an effort will be made to apprise the students about the origin and working of India's foreign policy. It is a well known fact that a country's foreign policy does not evolve all of a sudden rather it is a product of numerous factors and forces. India is no exception to this phenomenon. Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand and evaluate the historical perspective about the origin of its foreign policy. Besides, it is also essential to know about the major objectives of the policy as to ascertain the trends and working of its foreign affairs. But these objectives are not always manifested. As a result, to know the real intend of the working of foreign policy, one has to understand the broader policy framework. For this knowledge of major principles of governing foreign policy is to be deciphered. This may help to understand not only the day to day affairs of the state with the outside world but a long-term foreign policy also.

3. Historical Perspective

Foreign Policy of any country, to great extent, is determined by the specific nature of external and internal environment. Besides, the history, legacies, personality, ideologies, structural set up etc also influence the foreign policy of a country. India's foreign policy development is no exception to this fact. Multiple factors have contributed towards the finalisation of different goals and principles of its foreign policy. Hence, to study the impact of historical background on India's foreign policy becomes imperative as this has deep impact on the foreign policy making over the years. In this context, Nehru was right when he observed that it should not be inferred that India has started working as a state all of a sudden, rather its long past, contemporary history and freedom movement have formed its ideals.

3.1 Ideological Moorings -- Indian foreign policy is considered to be the by-product of two dominant ideological streams prevalent in its culture. These important traditions have been: (i) tradition based on friendship, cooperation, peace and non-violence developed by the thinkers of ancient India, i.e., Gautama Buddha and modern India, i.e., Mahatma Gandhi. They considered that means and ends are equally important and should be pure to attain any objective. (ii) Another tradition gave importance to

realism and power influenced by the ideas of western thinker Machiavelli and developed by Indian thinker Kautilya. It did not bother about the means, rather ends justify the means has been its main motto. Out of these two traditions, however, India adhered to the first one which primarily governed the foreign policy moorings of the country

- 3.2 International Status -- As far as the international identity is concerned, India got a solid result as it signed the covenant of League and Charter of United Nations as primary members. In the English Empire, three self rule dominions were there with whom it used to have consultations on matters of foreign affair on the bases of 1817 colonial conference. These dominions were --- Canada, Australia and South Africa. But India had not been given this right. During the First World War, India supported British like other dominions with a hope that it would get same status of foreign affairs as was being given to other such states. As a result, India got permission to join in colonial conference in 1917. Thus, for the first time India got membership of international organization in 1917. In the same year the name of this conference had been changed from colonial conference to Imperial Conference which was later changed into English Commonwealth. Anyhow, this has opened the gates for the entry of colonial India to participate in international conferences. Consequently, in 1945 at San Francisco as well, India joined the UN as primary member. Thus, India has already acquired international identity even prior to its independence.
- 3.3 Role of Indian National Congress -- Congress also contributed to a great deal for the evolution of the process of foreign policy making in India. It starts playing an important role in this direction since World War-I. The 1921 All India Congress Committee's session in New Delhi is considered to be the landmark in the history of India's foreign relations. In 1925, Congress authorized All India Congress Committee (AICC) to open a foreign department, with Jawaharlal Nehru at its head. But this department could not achieve something substantial during the period 1930-1934, as most of the leaders were busy in public movement or in jails. It could get importance again only after Nehru got elected as President of Congress in Lucknow session in 1936. In May 1936, under the leadership of Ram Manohar Lohia, the office of foreign department was established in All India National Congress's Office. Within six months of its existence, it contacted nearly 400 persons and institutions to formulate foreign policy. Besides, Congress started regularly releasing press notes and bulletins on all-important international issues. Probably as a result of huge network of Congress's foreign policy department, Jawaharlal Nehru was able to give a detailed and comprehensive blue print of independent India's foreign policy in his maiden radio broadcast on 7 September 1946 as Vice-President of interim government
- 3.4 Criticism of Colonialism -- Congress always condemned the policy of colonialism and imperialism. At its very first session in 1885, Congress had passed a resolution

deprecating the annexation of Upper Burma to the Indian Empire. In 1892, through another resolution, it disassociated and made itself free from the imperialist policy of Britain. In 1920, by sending the sympathy message to the people of Ireland for their struggle for freedom, Congress confirmed its attitude of support towards freedom struggle against colonialism. During the World War-II, India was critical of British imperialistic policies in general along with their particular response towards it. Congress also criticized the UN Charter through its working Committee resolution in July 1945. Two major objections of the Congress were: one, against the dominant role of the great powers in the new organization to the extent that they are placed above and beyond the law; and second, against the vague and unsatisfactory declaration in the Charter about non-selfgoverning territories.

3.5 Unattached to British Policies -- Congress time and again declared itself unattached to the British policies and proclaimed that the latter's policies has nothing to do with the ideas of Congress. In 1892, the Congress objected to the British policies to use India as a base for political manoeuvring or military moves against surrounding areas such as Tibet, Burma, Afghanistan and Persia. In 1921, for the first time in its All India Congress Committee meeting in Delhi, it declared through a general resolution that "the present environment of India in no way represents Indian opinion". Besides, it also declared that its neighbours not at all threaten India.

3.6 Support for Backward Nations -- Congress exhibited great interest for the unity and rise of backward and colonial states of Asia. In 1920, in Baku City of Kazakhstan in the erstwhile USSR when a conference of Asian states was convened India was one of the 19 countries called for such conference. In 1926 and 1927 such conferences were organized in Japan and China respectively. India also participated in them. Main aim of such meetings was to end the European colonialism in Asia. It resulted in the convening of Brussels conference on 10 February 1927. Convening of Asian countries meetings in New Delhi in 1947 and 1949 were proofs of such commitment.

Independent India's foreign policy, thus, has been marked by the impacts of legacies of British rule, experiences of freedom movement, role of leaders during freedom struggle etc. These factors, along with the changing national and international milieu, have given birth to major objectives and principles of independent India's foreign policy.

4. Objectives of India's Foreign Policy

Major objectives of every country's foreign policy are aimed at to fulfil the national interests of that state. India is no exception to this phenomenon. A depth analysis reveals that generally a consensus is found on the national interests in the country. But it may not always be necessary all the time.

4.1 National Security

For any country, national security and territorial integrity used to be the prime concern and main objective for it. Making a comparative assessment of the three primary

objectives it has rightly been observed that security is the first guarantee of a state's international personality; national development is its categorical imperative; and an ordered pattern of international relations is a minimum precondition for its independent existence and free development. In case of India, to a great extent, security includes both traditional and non-traditional threat concerns. It also includes independent decision making on international issues, opposition to military alliances, friendly relations with neighbours and opposition to policies of colonialism and imperialism. Besides, India has been a staunch critic of outside intervention and cold war. It is in favour of judging foreign policy issues on the merit of the case. Consequently, its policy of non-alignment represents its freedom, security and sovereignty.

4.2 Economic Development

For a developing country like India, rapid economic development naturally becomes significant determinant of its foreign policy. In this context, first of all it has to develop its power potentials which is dependent on three important variables- (I) population; (ii) natural resources; and (iii) technology. Later on, the pattern of growth in India has to be determined in terms of its constitutional limitations, role of state, and ideology of economic development. These domestic factors need to be coordinated with outside world through foreign policy. Thus it is inevitable for India to enhance its per capita income and gross domestic product to make it available for spending more in the areas of its defence. Besides, through diplomacy it has to stop the recurrence of wars and through United Nations it had to get the rules framed against the warfare. Moreover, it has to strength economic cooperation with outside world through the activities of foreign aid, capital investments, joint ventures, trade etc. Therefore, India since its inception has been a supporter of getting the IMF and World Bank loans and aids from the developed world. It has also approved the enhancement of bilateral technology transfer in vital areas of its economy. Probably this might have been the reason for India's insistence for the establishment of New International Economic Order (NIEO) since 1970s. It is also supporter of present organization like World Trade Organization (WTO).

4.3 World Order

Foreign policy of a country works in a particular international milieu. Major task of any country's foreign policy is to fulfil its national interests by making a favourable world order. That is why; Jawaharlal Nehru visualized the working of foreign policy in a larger global order. India has been supporter of policy of disarmament in the contest of threats from the nuclear explosions. Similarly, it opposed cold war politics in the larger interest of the requirement of peace for the developing countries. India was very much vocal on the issues, like freedom of colonies; opposition to colonialism, imperialism and racialism; opposition to power blocks; strengthening the United Nations; complete disarmament; world peace etc. Later on, economic issues acquired prominence over political factors.

Consequently, India became the main supporter of the demand for NIEO. During the cold war and post- cold war eras, India, on the one hand, has been making efforts for the establishment of NIEO, while, on the other hand, striking hard for the creation of nuclear free world. Thus, during the last more than six decades, India has been instrumental in creating an equalitarian and just world order to fulfil its national interests.

4.4 Opposition to Colonialism, Imperialism and Racialism

Struggle against colonialism, imperialism and racialism has been the leading "ideological currents" in Indian foreign policy. Based on India's own experiences with serviette, in the post independence era India supported the cause of anti-imperialism in the context of other such nations. India opposed all such policies of other such countries within the United Nations and outside this forum. Besides, India has been ardent critic of the policy of apartheid in South Africa. Beginning from Gandhi's movement and coming of Nelson Mandela to power, it has been continuously criticizing the functioning of racial regimes in South Africa. Besides, India has always felt concerned about the economic development of the nations in the African continent. Rajiv Gandhi's efforts toward the setting up of an `Africa fund` is a clear example of India's such foreign policy orientation

. 4.5 Supporter of Disarmament

India has been striving hard for disarmament through United Nations and other such forums. It had introduced numerous resolutions or amendments to resolutions introduced by other states in the United Nations to achieve the aim of general and complete disarmament. It has taken active part in the 18 nations committee on Disarmament (CD), which was created by the General Assembly in 1961, and opened in Geneva on 14 May 1962, and has been functioning ever since. In 1963, India not only initiated but also signed the `Moscow Test Ban Treaty` or Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT). Later on, through the 26-nations `Conference of the Committee on Disarmament` and non-alignment movement India facilitated the process of the indoctrination of non-proliferation treaty (NPT). However, due to its non-universal and discriminatory nature, India did not sign its final shape and started the demand for the conclusion of a `comprehensive` test ban treaty. Consequently, in December 1993, India and the United States of America jointly sponsored the CTBT. While presenting this treaty, India put two conditions - it should be universal and it should be aimed towards complete disarmament. But due to not fulfilment of these twin objectives in the final shape of this treaty, India refused to

sign the same. But still India is ready to sign any such treaty based on above two objectives and non- discriminatory in its nature.

4.5 Important Role in Asia

One central point of India's foreign policy has been to play an important role in Asia. Due to its history, cultural legacy, area, geographical conditions etc. its ruling elite perceived an important

role for India in this region. Even during freedom movement, it raised the grievances of these states along with its own concerns. A resolution passed by the first session of the congress in 1885 deprecated the annexation of Upper Burma by the British is proof of such interests of India. Besides, it participated in the important conferences convened to discuss the problems of Asia. For instance, it took part in 1920 Asian conference in Kazakhstan, along with 19 other nations. Not only this, even before its independence, it convened a conference of Asian states in New Delhi from 23 March to 2 April 1947. Later on, second such conference was called in New Delhi in 1949 on Indonesian question. Thus, India always made efforts to play a significant role in Asia.

4.7 Afro-Asian Regional Cooperation

Since its inception India is making serious efforts to bring out cooperation among the states of Asia and Africa. During cold war era, this effort has mainly been limited to political dimension. After covering of Asian conference in 1947 and 1949, India was also instrumental in bringing about unity and cooperation among Afro-Asian conference at Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955. Finally, non-aligned movement (NAM) was established from the majority of its membership from Asian and African nations. In the post cold war era, economic dimensions acquired prominence in the development of Afro-Asian cooperation. First, through the SAARC, an effort is being made to develop free-trade area. Second, by developing cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN, it wants to extend the area of cooperation in whole Asia. Finally by creating a 14 member (now reached to 20) Indian Ocean Rim - Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC) on 6 March 1997, India is interested to create cooperation among the countries of Asia, Africa and Indian Ocean littorals.

4.8 Faith in United Nations

One of the essential aims of India's foreign policy has been its quest for peace through the United Nations. India's deep commitment towards this body can be seen from its joining of the United Nations as primary member even prior to its freedom. India considers it as the only hope for peaceful cooperation among nations. That is why; it never wavered in its support to this body, even when it felt disappointed with the treatment meted out to it by the UN in respect of Kashmir and other such issues. India took keen interest in all kinds of activities of the United Nations. By giving prime importance to peace in its foreign policy, it has indirectly contributed to strengthen the foundation of the United Nations. Despite its poverty it has always paid its contribution to the United Nations in time. It has also contributed its forces for the UN peacekeeping activities.

4.9 Protection of Overseas Indian

Protection of the interests of the overseas Indians has been an important objective of India's foreign policy. Basically, overseas Indian could be categorized into three groups: (i) Indian citizens staying abroad for an indefinite period for whatever purpose (such as employment or business, whether or their own, or on special governmental assignments or working in

international organizations). They have been clearly defined as non-resident Indians (NRIs) in the FERA, 1973: (ii) people who were forced to immigrate to different parts of the British Empire. Now the descendents of those migrants who are called people of Indian Origin (PIOs); and, (iii) finally, people who are legally and technically branded as stateless persons of Indian origin (SPIOs). India's policy towards them has been two fold - (i) For those who have adopted the nationality of the country in which they are living, India has no political concern with them, though it would continue to have sentimental concern for them. For them Government of India won't ask for special privileges, but where any unfair treatment is given to them, of course, it is bound to react. (ii) In case of NRIs Government is willing to extend all kinds of cooperation. Some of them have recently been provided double citizenship. These steps are being taken with the expectation that they will greatly contribute towards the economic and technological development of India.

5 Principles of India's Foreign Policy

To fulfil the above objectives India's foreign policy is governed by certain principles. Principles on the one hand, provide rational analysis of foreign policy, and on the other hand, they represent continuity in foreign affairs. The principles governing India's foreign policy are as under: -

5.1 Non-alignment

Most important and central focus of India's foreign policy is its principle of non-alignment. Basically, India's policy of non-alignment has been derived from two fold sources: material and non-material. The two key material mainsprings are geopolitical and economic in character. Among the non-material sources prominent are – historical legacies; and, philosophy/tradition of the country. Non-alignment has numerous dimensions but usually it is considered to be a policy related to cold war. In other words, it is considered to be a policy not to participate in the military alliances systems raised out of cold war period. Besides, India regarded it as a principle having independent outlook in global politics. It is a policy, which provides India an opportunity to act independently on world problems without any pressures from the so-called superpowers. This policy of independence of choice was first determined by national interest and then by merit of the issue and the world situation.

Some Western observers often confuse this policy with the terms like- isolationism, noncommitment etc. But these concepts are in no way similar to that of the non -alignment. For instance, neutrality as policy of non-commitment had limited use during war times, whereas policy of non-alignment is applied both in times of war and peace. Moreover, these days it is not easy to remain neutral in world affairs. Thus, India cannot remain neutral where freedom, justice and aggression are involved. Similarly, comparison of non-alignment with that of the concepts of isolationism is also unwarranted. It is because; isolationism is not possible in the contemporary world. Therefore, India's policy of non-alignment is considered in a positive manner as the policy related to development of goodwill and economic cooperation among different states. It is

because; on the basis of such cooperation the realization of the ideal of 'one world' can be achieved. Non-alignment, therefore, is a multi-dimensional policy having both its positive and negative aspects. It was not a policy of nonchalant, rather a dynamic policy which changes according to the changes that take place in the international milieu.

5.2 Panchsheel

Ethical and peaceful dimensions of India's foreign policy are also reflected through its policy of panchsheel which means five principles of peaceful co-existence. These principles were first enunciated in the preamble of trade agreement signed between India and China on 29 April 1955. Later on, these were reiterated in a joint statement issued during the visit of China's Premier Chou en Lai to India on 28 June 1954. Five principles of panchsheel are: (i) mutual respect for each others' territorial integrity and sovereignty; (ii) non-aggression; (iii) non-interference in each others' domestic affairs; (iv) equality and mutual benefits; and, (v) peaceful coexistence. These principles are not only related to India's policy towards China, but also a declared policy towards other neighbours and rest of the world. Though a question mark has been put on the use of this principle by the 1962 Sino-Indian war, yet India did not give up its faith in such policy. Rather, with the improvement in India-China relations during the contemporary post-cold war era, faith in these principles has again been reiterated.

5.3 Dynamism and Adaptability

India's foreign policy apart from being a dynamic policy has the capacity to adapt itself to international changes. For instance, non-alignment did not mean that India always opposed the receipt of military assistances. Rather it had accepted such aid and assistance whenever national interests demanded so. For instance, it accepted America's military assistance during 1962 crisis. Conclusion of military - to - military cooperation in the Asia-Pacific in the post- cold war era in 1991 is another illustration of India's such flexible approach. Besides, to give military assistance to Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka during the period of crises are additional proofs of such changing stance. It was due to this dynamic nature; India's foreign policy has well adapted to the changing international milieu. Moreover, from the cold warrior bloc politics of 1950s and 1960s to that of quite opposite world found in the post- cold war era, India has been successfully meeting out its divergent foreign policy challenges due to its flexible orientations. During these decades, India has made itself capable enough to handle the crises like four major wars with neighbours, non-proliferation and missile technology development obstacles, and economic regionalism.

5.4 Peaceful Coexistence

Finally, the principal of peaceful coexistence also constitutes one of the principles of India's foreign policy. Though it is constituent of India's principle of Panchsheel, yet in a more comprehensive manner it represents the overall cultural ethos of 'live and let others live' of India's tradition. In one more sense, it can be looked as an independent phenomenon to that of

Panchsheel, as the latter does not recognize the divisibility of world on the basis of ideology and believe in the philosophy of friendship with all countries. Moreover, in terms of military alliances, it does not prevent the states to form or join any group beyond such blocs. Despite criticisms of cold warrior blocs of capitalism and communism, it did not prevent the states from forging closer economic, social, cultural and scientific cooperation with the countries of these blocs. Hence, it believes in the cooperation and friendship among all the countries of world for the growth of peace and development around the globe.

6 Conclusion

Thus, India's foreign policy has been the by-product of specific historical backgrounds in which contribution of INC, experiences of freedom movement and its leadership have been outstanding. This historical backdrop to a great extent has influenced the growth of various principles of India's foreign policy. That is why in the post-independence era, three basic objectives i.e., national security; economic development and world order proved to be the core issues around which India's foreign policy revolved. Besides it has given birth to certain objectives which provided the goals for its foreign policy. Broadly speaking, these objectives have been in opposition to colonialism and racialism; efforts towards establishment of Afro- Asian unity; develop faith in UN systems; friendship with all nations; protection of overseas Indians etc. To implement these objectives, it adopted the twin main principles of non-alignment and panchsheel as its basic framework. Besides, the principles of pragmatism, dynamism and adaptability and peaceful coexistence have been adhered to. Through these principles, India has been pursuing its interests and adapting itself to meet the challenges of changed global milieu.

